

FILE ONLY

Graham Martin, 77, Dies; Envoy at Saigon's Fall

By ALFONSO A. NARVAEZ

Graham A. Martin, a career diplomat who was the last United States Ambassador to South Vietnam, died of a heart ailment on Tuesday at Forsythe Hospital in Winston-Salem, N.C. He was 77 years old and lived in Winston-Salem.

Tall, slender and courtly, Mr. Martin served in Saigon from 1973 until the end of April 1975, when thousands of American troops, Vietnamese officials and United States Embassy personnel were evacuated in the final chaotic hours of the Vietnam War.

Mr. Martin was sharply criticized for his handling of the evacuation, in which thousands of Vietnamese who worked for the United States and hundreds of classified documents were left behind. Some officials charged that he had aggravated the situation by not ordering American troops out of Saigon, now Ho Chi Minh City, earlier.

Mr. Martin defended his role, calling the evacuation "a hell of a good job."

In 1976 he told a House Foreign Affairs subcommittee that the accusations were "gross distortions" and that his final 10 days in Saigon "required a most careful walking of the tightrope of judgment of just how the situation was developing."

The final hours of the American presence in Vietnam were detailed in "Decent Interval," a 1977 book by Frank Snepp, a senior Central Intelligence Agency analyst in Vietnam from 1972 to 1975. Mr. Snepp charged that embassy officials had failed to plan adequately for the evacuation and that Mr. Martin had attempted to negotiate a peaceful end to the war while ignoring intelligence reports that North Vietnam wanted total victory.

Mr. Martin was familiar with controversy. In a previous assignment, as Ambassador to Italy from 1969 to 1973, he helped funnel millions of dollars in covert aid to the Christian Democrats and other Italian parties opposed to the Communists.

In 1972, over the objections of the Central Intelligence Agency, he won approval of a payment of about \$800,000 to Gen. Vito Miceli, an Italian neo-fascist, with no restrictions on how the money would be spent. General Miceli was later accused of right-wing plots to overthrow the Italian Government.

Battles With McNamara

Earlier, as Ambassador to Thailand in the Johnson Administration, Mr. Martin battled with Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara over the level of aid to the Thai Government. He argued successfully against a Pentagon proposal to divert aid from Thailand to Vietnam.

After serving in Vietnam he became a special assistant to Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger. He retired in 1977.

Graham Anderson Martin was born on Sept. 22, 1912, in Mars Hill, N.C., and graduated from Wake Forest College in 1932. He worked briefly as a Washington correspondent for several southern newspapers and in 1933 joined the National Recovery Administration, where he served as an aide to W. Averell Harriman, then the deputy administrator.

In 1936, he joined the Social Security Board and a year later opened the first field office for the agency in Asheville, N.C. He returned to Washington in 1941, joined the Army Air Corps as a lieutenant and rose to colonel.

Assistant to Douglas Dillon

In 1947 he joined the Foreign Service and was posted to Paris for eight years. He earned high ratings from a succession of ambassadors, among them C. Douglas Dillon, who later became Under Secretary of State. In 1959 Mr. Dillon appointed Mr. Martin as his special assistant.

Three years later, after serving as the deputy United States coordinator for the Alliance for Progress, Mr. Martin was named United States representative to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva.

He served there until May 1963 and was then named Ambassador to Thailand, where he negotiated for the use of secret airfields by American warplanes.

In addition to serving as Ambassador to Thailand until 1967, he was the United States representative to the Council of the South East Asia Treaty Organization. From 1967 to 1969, he was a special assistant to the Secretary of State for refugee and migration affairs and in 1969 was named Ambassador to Italy. In 1973, he was named to head the United States Embassy in Saigon.

In 1967 he was given the State Department's Distinguished Honor award.

He is survived by his wife, the former Dorothy Wallace; two daughters, Janet Martin Tantensapya and Nancy Lane, and a son, Michael, all of Winston-Salem; and four grandchildren.

The Washington Post _____
The New York Times B-13
The Washington Times _____
The Wall Street Journal _____
The Christian Science Monitor _____
New York Daily News _____
USA Today _____
The Chicago Tribune _____

Date 15 MAR 1990